



Author

.....

.....

Title

.....

.....

Class PS2794

Imprint

Book S33B6

.....



PRIZE TALE.

THE

BLIND WIDOW,

AND

HER FAMILY.

WRITTEN FOR THE

Evangelical Magazine

AND

Gospel Advocate.

===== (Horney) =====
BY MRS. JULIA H. SCOTT,
Towanda, Pa.''

HUDSON:

PRINTED BY ASHBEL STODDARD.

.....
1837.

THE BLIND WIDOW AND HER FAMILY.



It is a pleasant thing to cast, occasionally, life's little cares and perplexities aside, and let oppressed memory fill up her beautiful casket with the gem-like reminiscences of early years. She brings us the impression of many a bright form, now mouldering in earth—she recalls to us many a thrilling scene of the long, long past, whose very remembrance sends the warm blood to the heart, and we awake and look round us for the performers of those generous deeds—those high and princely acts, which were, in early manhood, the themes of our admiration; forgetting the partiality of change for our fair earth's loveliest features, and that the north wind scatters not more readily the frail flowers of Summer, than does change the cherished blossoms of humanity. But they leave (thank Heaven!) their memory, and we linger with melancholy fondness upon the Christian fortitude, the self-denial, the pure, impartial benevolence, until, from these, we go back to the holy principles from whence they emanated, and lose ourselves in contemplating the religion which taught those blessed ones to gather smiles at the fountain of tears, and overcome the temptations of this world by the low-voiced spirit of pious love.

I was but a child when Mrs. Hamilton became a widow; but I was permitted to attend her husband's funeral, and can never forget the small group of darkly clad forms that clustered round his grave, nor how, with childish curiosity, I caught the hand of one of the little orphans, and

gazed rudely into his face, to see if he were crying. Nor can I forget how I turned away and wept, when I saw the Widow, with clasped hands, raise her sightless eyes to heaven, and heard the deep sobbings of the eldest daughter and son, who had led their blind mother to the grave. I wept, but with infantile selfishness; for I reflected, what if it were *our* own dear father who was dead, how would Charles and Harriet cry, and how bad we should all feel if *our* poor mother could not see. Such were the natural suggestions of simple, childish feeling; and so deeply does the pen of early impression engrave its characters on the tablets of the immortal mind, that the little scene just described, though of no particular importance to myself, shines forth to recollection as vividly as if but a yesterday's transaction, although many long years have since gone by. But to my narrative.

Mr. Hamilton married with very good prospects in life. I mean in *humble* life. He was the owner of a small dry goods shop in one of our Southern cities, and his well known honesty and persevering business habits, rendered it probable that he would arrive, if not at opulence, to at least respectable independence. But who, alas! may calculate on the certainty of any human event? Mr. Hamilton had the misfortune to render himself unpopular among his friends, by the open and earnest advocacy of a system of religion (Universalism) which was deemed, in those days, the root of incalculable evils, and the very kernel of heresy. This was an offence not to be tolerated, and it injured his business materially. He had, beside, one failing, (for it is conceded that Universalists *have* some failings,

although, in view of their doctrines, one would almost deem the thing impossible) which was not at all calculated to win the smiles of father Mammon; namely, a benevolence of heart, which always caused him to shed tear for tear with the unfortunate, and to open freely his purse for their relief.

Notwithstanding, however, the unpopularity and too-far-carried effects of his religion, there was little doubt of his having obtained a competency, but for the breaking out of a fire which resulted in the destruction of his shop, and nearly all its uninsured effects. This was an almost overwhelming disaster, as it reduced him to the necessity of accepting an offer of clerkship in a large mercantile establishment, the proprietor of which, a Mr. Ward, enjoyed no very enviable reputation. This man had been recently excommunicated from some Christian church, the doctrines of which he continued to advocate, long after his expulsion, for the purpose, it was said, of furthering the more easily, his dark intrigues, under the fair covering of piety. But we will leave his character to develope itself in the course of these details.

Long and faithfully had Mr. Hamilton labored in the service of "Merchant Ward," as he was called; the avails of that labor barely affording his family a subsistence, including the expense of educating his two eldest children—the first, a beautiful daughter of seventeen, and a son two years younger; when he was taken away by sudden and severe sickness from the active scenes of life, leaving his afflicted wife and five children to struggle unprotected through a cold, uncharitable world!

It was with a heavy heart that Widow Hamilton returned from the funeral to her humble home. 'The one dear voice' was not there to welcome her; neither the kind hand which had often, since the developement of that dreadful disease, called cataract of the eye, been extended to direct her uncertain steps. The pale mourner sank for a moment, overcome with painful emotions, but the many sweet consolations of the faith whose hopes had brightened her whole life, and sustained her husband in the hour of death, sent down their precious encouragements to her heart, and gave her peace. 'Thou art not an orphan, my little James,' cried she, clasping her youngest son fondly in her arms. 'Neither are ye fatherless,' she continued, drawing closely together her little bevy of bereaved ones, 'the Father of the fatherless is yours. He watches you, and will spread his mantle of love over you, and ye shall not be hurt. He watches you, and will gather, in due time, your immortal spirits, with the whole world's purified intelligences, to bloom like sweet flowers, as it were, in his own bright garden forever! The storm of adversity, 'tis true, is gathering darkly above your heads; but remember the injunctions of the dear parent that is gone, and trust in your Saviour. Let your hearts go up to him in frequent prayer, and believe me, Oh my precious, sorrowing ones! believe me, he will bless you—*he will bless you!*' Oh, who could have seen the grateful tears of those affectionate children as they caught the inspiring words of their pious mother—who could have felt their young, innocent hearts beating warmly with high, devotional resolves—who could have heard their fervent aspirations to Him who once took

such as themselves to his bosom, and blessed them—who could have seen and felt all this, and said, 'This is the spirit of Antichrist? Or, rather, who could have witnessed these things, and refrained from saying, 'This is the light which must ultimately dawn upon every one that cometh into the world?'

The death of Mr. Hamilton, it will of course be supposed, from his extremely small income, left his family in very depressed circumstances. The expenses incurred in his sickness and burial, were considerable; and the Widow found herself under the immediate necessity of disposing of her pleasant home, and removing to miserable lodgings, in a narrow by-street, in order to save the additional cost of high rent. Here, with the assistance of her eldest son, Robert—who, at his father's decease, was taken into the establishment of Merchant Ward—the slight avails of Marian's sewing, and her own small jobs of knitting, (being the only work her afflicted situation allowed her to do,) she contrived to live, although the strictest and most ingenious economy was necessary to keep them from a state of actual pauperism. But no complaint was made, and when they were all seated around their scant evening fire—for Robert staid with them at nights—the closest observer could not have detected a single cloud upon their smiling faces, nor heard a sentence from their lips, betokening aught but the most peaceful serenity. And when the long evening's sweet and cheerful conversation was over, they all joined in singing a family hymn, which was succeeded by the low-voiced mother in prayer and thanksgiving, and the young members of that holy family sought their pillows with

the seeds of eternal life spreading beautifully their warm roots through the soul's deep avenues. But the hour of temptation was at hand, for one, at least, of their number; and wily were the snares of the enemy, laid to entrap his victim.

Merchant Ward had, during the lifetime of Mr. Hamilton, tried every art in his power to obtain the services of that excellent man in some of his dishonest schemes. He commenced by endeavoring to sap Mr. Hamilton's religious principles; thinking that by converting him to his own partial system—by doing away the parental relationship between man and his Maker—he might destroy that love for his fellow-creatures, which had ever induced Mr. Hamilton to consider *their* interest as *his own*. But it was of no use, and of this the crafty merchant was soon convinced, and therefore changed the form of his attack. He next attempted to confound principle with interest and necessity—to erase those nice distinctions between virtue and the form thereof, and lead his victim blindfolded, as it were, into 'by and forbidden paths.' The practised eye of James Hamilton, however, detected all his subtleties and scorned them; as, also, his delicately managed hints at bribery; and the vexed and baffled merchant would have discarded him, but for the reflection, that he could find no one to fill his place. Of the young and inexperienced son, however, he hoped different things—and many were the guarded lectures to which the unsuspecting young man was obliged to listen, often wondering to what such things tended.

It was late one stormy evening, when, in a dark and unfrequented street, some one touched Robert's arm, and the voice of Merchant Ward

sounded in his ear. 'Robert,' said he, 'I forgot, to-day, to speak with you on a subject of some importance. But I presume 't will do just as well now, as this spot seems to be perfectly private. You recollect, I dare say, Col. Hartley's giving me a check on the Mobile Bank, a few days since, while in the store?' 'I recollect, Sir,' replied Robert, after a moment's musing, 'seeing him sign a check; but I thought it was on a Bank in this city.' 'No, no, 't was Mobile. Don't you know he spoke of its permanency, and also mentioned his extensive interest in it?' 'He did; but I have still an impression that the check related to a Bank *here*.' 'No doubt you have, but a moment's reflection must convince you of your mistake. 'Tis a subject of considerable consequence to me, and it will, I assure you, be greatly to *your* advantage to *remember right*—for should the matter be called in question, as report says it will, I shall depend on you to evidence the facts of the case. The thing is undoubtedly coming to your memory?'

'No, Sir,' answered Robert, after some pause, 'my mind is quite confused on the subject, and reflection only seems to confirm my first impressions.'

'Well, it is very strange,' muttered the merchant, inwardly provoked to find the lad's memory so perversely pertinacious—'tis very strange you should get things so mixed up. You remember the Colonel's mentioning, particularly, the Mobile Bank—you recollect his signing the check; and *I* remember that said check related to said Bank. You will, therefore, I presume, have no objection to telling the good jury of the court, should one be called, that you saw Colonel Hartley give me

a Mobile check, remembering, all the time, that in performing this little act of friendship, or I might say, duty, you are materially benefiting yourself.'

'I will, most cheerfully, tell them all I know about it,' rejoined Robert, 'for I should be glad to oblige you ; but I would not, for worlds, testify to a circumstance, of the truth of which I am not perfectly positive.'

'Poh !' replied the merchant, 'there can be no harm in it, at all—you have my word for its truth, and you have got it all yourself, except the little minutia. Beside, if that exquisite conscience of yours should ever trouble you, a priest will absolve it. Or, you may repent on Protestant principles, and be none the worse. And then,' he continued, in a soft insinuating tone, (feeling the arm he had taken endeavoring to withdraw itself,) 'the reward you shall receive will make your family independent, and the day may come that will see you a partner in my establishment. Only think, Robert, a partner with Merchant Ward !'

Robert Hamilton was, by no means, destitute of ambition ; and we will not say that his heart did not beat quicker at the thought of seeing his dear mother, and her little ones, in a more comfortable situation ; or of being, himself, at some future period, in independent circumstances. But whatever his thoughts may have been, they glided by, like shadows across the dial plate, without marring the pure polish of pious virtue.

'You have certainly mistaken my character,' said he, slowly, but firmly—his fine youthful form expanding into manliness, as the tide of indignant blood rushed impetuously through his

swelling veins—‘you have mistaken my character; for, young as I am, I have learned to love and keep my heavenly Father’s commandments. And sooner shall this body be consumed by hunger—sooner shall this tongue be torn out by the roots, than it shall infringe one little hair’s breadth upon the law which says, ‘Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.’

‘Then, may these curses fall upon thee,’ shouted the enraged merchant, his voice almost choked with the hoarseness of immoderate passion—‘may these curses, and worse than these, fall upon thee, baser son of a base father! Ay, and they shall, if I have any influence over thy destiny. Presume not, henceforth, to set thy foot within my door, but beware. ‘Thou hast goaded the lion and may test his strength!’

‘Say, rather,’ said a deep voice near them, ‘he has disturbed the *viper*, and may feel his *fangs*.’

And at that moment two human figures passed them, but slowly, as if to witness the result of the conference. The merchant turned upon his heel, without another word, and Robert hastened home to relieve the anxiety of those who, he knew, must be wondering at his long absence.

‘What ails you, Robert?’ said his little sister Rose, as the light fell upon his face at the door—‘what ails Robert, Marian?’

‘You are very pale, my brother,’ said Marian, laying aside her work—‘I hope nothing has happened.’

‘Are you sick?’ added the anxious voice of Mrs. Hamilton.

‘No, mother, I am only a little melancholy. I have been strongly tempted to-night, and——’

‘And you resisted’—half exclaimed, half inquired the Widow, hurriedly.

‘Yes, mother, I did.’

‘Thank God! thank God!’ came from the full heart of Mrs. Hamilton.

‘I *did* resist,’ continued Robert, ‘but Heaven knows whether it may not be the ruin of us all.’

‘Fear not that, my beloved child,’ she replied, clasping her hands affectionately round his neck, ‘thou hast foiled thy most bitter enemy; and dearer, far dearer art thou to me, with thy pure, unspotted heart, than if thou hadst returned laden with the spoils of many conquered nations. Fear not—but trust in Him who never forsakes the innocent, and thou shalt ever find cause to rejoice!’

The circumstances of his meeting with Merchant Ward were soon related by Robert, with the exception of what had excited in his mind a suspicion of forgery. This he carefully suppressed, and after a few brief and charitable comments, the evening passed away, as if nothing had happened.

It was but a few days after this, that, as Robert was strolling through the city, hoping to find some employment he met John Surrey, a former companion, of nearly his own age, who was living with Merchant Ward, and with whom Robert had associated on terms of affectionate intimacy.

‘We were all sorry to lose you, Robert,’ said John, grasping his hand, ‘and I guess master ’ll be sorry, too, some day—and this brings me to a secret, which I want you should promise to keep for me.’

‘I do not like secrets, John,’ replied Robert, ‘they are very apt to make mischief.’

‘That is because they are not well kept. This will hurt nobody, unless it is told, and I hope you will not refuse to gratify me in so small a matter.’

‘Why, certainly not,’ rejoined the warm-hearted, unsuspecting boy, ‘if it can do no harm.’

‘You promise, then,’ said the other, ‘not to reveal what I am going to tell you?’

‘I do.’

‘Well, then, here it is; the very eyetooth of old hardhearted Ward;’ and he took from his pocket an elegant gold repeater, suspended by a chain of great value. Robert drew back with a look of painful astonishment.

‘It cannot be possible, John,’ said he, ‘that you have really—really—’

‘That I have *really* learned *hocus pocus*, you would say, Bob. There is nothing truer, I assure you; and master is undoubtedly looking for it, by this time. Now, he will suspect me, in the start, and I want you to keep it for me till the fuss is over, and then you shall have half it is worth.’

‘Oh, foolish, ruined boy!’ exclaimed Robert, ‘what have you done? Did you not know that a greater eye than Merchant Ward’s was upon you? And that you might as well attempt to escape the shaft of death, as the thunderbolt retribution of thy God? Go back to Mr. Ward, John; confess before him, and your heavenly Father, your fault; and you may yet obtain mercy. But ask not me to become a partaker in your wickedness.’

‘Am I an idiot, Robert,’ answered the boy, sullenly, ‘that you expect me to beg forgiveness of a man whose very creed is *revenge*!—But I see you are not disposed to befriend me, and I suppose I must stand or fall by myself.’ And starting off abruptly, he was out of sight ere Robert could renew the exhortation, which rose with redoubled tenderness to his lips.

It was on the evening succeeding this event, that a loud rap was heard at the door of Widow Hamilton, and on its being opened, two police officers entered, and seizing Robert by the arm, pronounced him their prisoner.

‘And of what, gentlemen, am I accused?’ asked he, eyeing them with a look of calm surprise. But how was that look changed to one of deep consternation, when, from his outer pocket, one of the officers produced the identical watch which he had seen in the hands of John Surrey! The whole truth and its fearful consequences flashed upon him at once; and turning away from them, he said in a mournful voice, “mother, I fear it is all over with me. I am caught in the toils of the adversary, and see no chance of escape. But pray for me, dear mother; for, believe me, I am innocent.” And he tore himself from the sobbing group that surrounded him, and accompanied the officers to prison. One moment gave the Widow to tears, and petitioning for Heaven’s aid, but the next was for action. Counsel must be obtained; but how, alas, could it be, without that general stimulator to good deeds—money? Various plans were thought of, and rejected, till at length Marian proposed selling her harp, a present from her dear father, in his prosperous days. A sale was ultimately effected, and the services of a young and inexperienced lawyer, (the only one, however, with whom they were acquainted,) were immediately engaged.

The trial came on at an early day, and Merchant Ward and the treacherous Surrey were nearly the first to enter the court-room. The prisoner was soon called, and the spectators were surprised to behold, instead of a dark, heartless

looking culprit, a lad of frank, open countenance, on which sat an expression of sweet, but melancholy resignation.

‘That does not look like guilt,’ exclaimed one, as he passed.

‘It may be but the hypocrisy of its callousness,’ was the reply.

The trial commenced. The evidence of the officers who arrested the prisoner, was first taken, and then arose John Surrey, who detailed very correctly the conversation had between himself and young Hamilton, a few days previous—with which the reader has been already favored—taking care, however, to put his own dark words into the mouth of poor Robert. The case seemed too clear to need any farther investigation, and when the counsel for the defendant commenced cross-examination, his extreme embarrassment showed plainly that he was convinced of his client’s guilt. He had asked but two or three faint, irrelevant questions, when a stern voice, from the farther end of the room, cried, ‘Stop!’ and a tall, manly figure strode fearlessly through the room, and after consulting the prisoner a moment, and whispering to his lawyer an emphatic ‘sit down!’ took the latter’s place.

‘’Tis the People’s Lawyer,’ said an old gentleman near Robert, in reply to the question, ‘Who is he?’ ‘’Tis the People’s Lawyer—the best and wealthiest man in the city, and one who never pleads except when he sees oppression preying upon poverty and innocence. Merchant Ward had best look to himself; for, an old man’s word for it! something is going wrong.’

The People’s Lawyer, as he was significantly termed, was a man aged about twenty-eight, pos-

sessed of superior beauty of person, and it was said of commanding eloquence, which was often successfully employed in the cause of the widow and orphan. He was, therefore, the fear of the oppressor, and the almost idol of the poor and honest. He was master, moreover, of a penetration of mind, which, in some cases, seemed almost intuition. And as his dark eye now glanced upon the face of the witness, it seemed to read his character at once. He gazed for one long moment, sternly and fixedly upon his quailing eye and varying cheek—then raising his right hand, and pointing his forefinger at his very heart, he cried in a voice that might have startled the conscience of a Nero,—

‘John Surrey—John Surrey—knowest thou not that the eye of the eternal God is upon thee? Knowest thou not that his pen hath this day written perjury against thy soul? And knowest thou not, oh, thrice miserable young man! that he will lay in thy sickening bosom the fiery coilings of that worm which dieth not, but writhes, and writhes, and sends its deadly venom into all the channels of thought, and feeling, and hope, until the poor victim looks down with melancholy longing into the gloomy grave, and would give worlds for its cold serenity? Knowest thou not that peace shall visit thee no more, day nor night, forever, unless thou dost recall the dark words which thou hast this hour spoken? Look at thy victim, deluded boy! think of his affection and brotherly kindness to thee, and then tell me how thou wilt feel to see his youthful form wasting away under the cruel labor of a State’s prison. Tell me how thou wilt feel to see his friends weeping over him, as one dead—ay, worse than

dead—disgraced—and all for a few false words of thine. Look, young man, and tell me.’

The eye of John Surrey turned involuntarily towards the prisoner’s box, and his cheek grew paler, and his lip quivered; for memory was busy at his heart. He thought of the unvarying gentleness of that injured friend—of the many little sacrifices he had made for his comfort and gratification; he thought of their many sweet moments of tender intimacy, when Robert had talked to him of heaven, and called him dear brother, and his own black treachery rose in hideous contrast. He forgot Merchant Ward and his bribe—he forgot his own danger—he forgot every thing, save present injustice and former love—and rushing forward, and throwing his arms round the neck of Robert Hamilton, he sobbed out a full confession of his own and his Master’s base schemes for Robert’s ruin, upon his bosom. Twice did the enraged merchant rise—twice did he attempt to speak—but the eye of the People’s Lawyer frowned him down, and he was glad to escape unharmed, out of court.

Who shall describe the joy of the little family of Hamiltons, on the evening of Robert’s restoration to their society?

‘If I could only see your benefactor, the People’s Lawyer,’ said Marian, ‘I am sure I should quite worship him. And did you not find out where he lives, Robert?’

‘No; in the hurry of the moment, I suppose, he forgot to mention his address. But I remember, perfectly, the few words he spoke to me, on leaving. “Go home,” said he, “dear, honest boy, and gladden your friends by your presence. But come to me, next week, when I shall be at

home ; for I would like to have farther conversation with you. But, forget not, meanwhile, to return thanks to your Maker, for the happy termination of your difficulties.”

‘Noble, generous soul,’ exclaimed Mrs. Hamilton, ‘let us not forget his injunction, my children, but return thanks to Him whose hand is so plainly manifest. Let us not cease giving glory, and honor, and praise to his name, forever and ever.’ And her two pious children responded, fervently, ‘Amen.’

It was while Robert was in prison, that Mrs. Hamilton received a letter from a distant relative, in the city of New-York, offering to procure a lucrative situation for her son, near him, and requesting his immediate presence. This chance was not to be neglected, and Robert accordingly set out the next morning after his release, regretting deeply, however, the necessity of leaving his mother and her family in so unprotected a situation, as also his inability to testify his deep gratitude to the People’s Lawyer. It was not until after her son’s departure, that Mrs. Hamilton and her daughter began to reflect upon their almost hopeless pecuniary circumstances. Robert’s traveling expenses had taken nearly the last penny that remained of the money received for the harp, and they knew not where to look for more. Their quarterly rent had become due—their stock of provisions was running low—the little ones were almost destitute of clothes—it would be sometime before they could expect remittances from Robert, and, to add to their embarrassment and distress, the youngest child, a fine boy of six years, was taken ill of the disease which terminated his father’s existence. The heart of the

poor widow was sorely tried in these accumulating difficulties. But she forgot not to look to the true source, for comfort and assistance. Nor did she look in vain. A newspaper accidentally came into Marian's hands, containing an advertisement by a Mrs. Brownson, for some neat, original scenery paintings to grace her center table. Marian had been acknowledged, while at school, to possess splendid talents for drawing. She therefore set immediately about the task, and her anxiety to earn something for the support of her suffering family, seemed to give her a species of inspiration. For in a short time, notwithstanding the increasing illness of little James, she had succeeded in finishing two rich and delicate pieces.

Taking advantage one evening of her sick brother's hour of sleep, she and Rose set out with beating hearts for the residence of Mrs. Brownson, into which they were admitted as soon as their errand became known.

'Send them in here,' exclaimed a shrill, treble voice to the servant who announced them, 'I would not go into that cold room to see West, himself.'

They were accordingly ushered into a splendid drawing-room, where several young ladies and gentlemen were congregated, for the apparent purpose of abusing father Time with unmeaning prattle. The beautiful cheek of Marian became suffused with the deepest crimson, as she beheld the eye-glass of one of the young ladies, ranging itself in the direction of a faded breadth of her almost threadbare pelisse. But she conquered the feeling of shame and indignation, and walking with a calm, but respectful dignity to the table where Mrs. Brownson remained sitting, she

submitted her paintings for inspection. They were soon handed from one to another, accompanied by comments many of which seemed made without the least regard for the feelings of the humble artist.

‘Well Kitty, what do you think of them?’ inquired Mrs. Brownson of her daughter, the second time.

‘Why, ma,’ drawled out the silly girl, in a tone of affected contempt, ‘I think they look very much like my own first attempts.’

‘Then your first attempts must have been very beautiful, Miss Brownson,’ exclaimed a rich, manly voice, ‘and your mother had best, by all means, collect them immediately.’

Marian could not see the speaker, for he sat in the shade; but she felt that there was balm in his words.

‘Well child,’ said Mrs. Brownson, in a somewhat softened tone, ‘what do you ask for your paintings? I suppose from your looks, that you need all they are worth, and perhaps charity should add a little more.’

The color again visited Marian’s pale cheek, and a tear stood in her dark, intelligent eye, but remembering that forbearance is one of the greatest of Christian virtues, she replied modestly and calmly, ‘I have not priced them, madam, but you may give me what you think they are *worth*. I wish nothing more.’

‘If you had only come in the day time,’ continued the unfeeling woman, ‘I could have judged better of their merits. Why in the world didn’t you get here before dark? Perhaps, though, you thought some defects in your pictures might be more easily detected by thus doing.’

The recollection of her poor mother, and her little brother's distressed situation—of the high hopes which had animated her on her setting out from home—and, above all, the imputation of low trickery in coming at the time she did, sent an arrow to the heart of poor Marian, and she could only falter out, 'I could not leave my sick brother,' ere her feelings burst forth in a torrent of irrepressible tears.

'You need not feel so bad, my dear,' said Mrs. Brownson, with an awkward attempt to soothe, 'but give me your name and place of residence, and I will send you the pay for these scraps in the morning.'

The information was given, and Marian was glad to find herself and sister once more in the street.

'Where are you going, my pretty misses, in such a hurry?' asked a vulgar looking creature, staggering up to them. 'I am just in time to be a beau for you'—and he caught hold of Marian's veil.

A loud shriek was the reply, and in the next instant a powerful arm prostrated the reeling figure upon the pavement; and a voice, which Marian thought she had heard before, begged her not to be frightened, but permit him to protect her home; an offer which she was glad to accept. The stranger bade her good night, at the threshold, and the agitated girl hastened to inform her mother of her indifferent success.

It was at an early hour, the next morning, that a gentle rap was heard at the Widow's door, and a young man of very prepossessing appearance, habited in the plain garb of a mechanic, entered, and gave Miss Hamilton a card, containing Mrs. Brownson's compliments, accompanied by a bank note of some considerable amount.

'There must be some mistake here,' said Marian, 'I did not expect half so much.'

'But she has examined them by daylight,' replied the stranger.

Marian colored to the very temples—not so much at the remembrance of the ill treatment of the preceding evening, to which the stranger's words recalled her, as at the sound of a voice which it seemed to her she had twice heard before, and which, she all at once recollected to have gone so far as to dream about. The young man perceiving her confusion, and not suspecting, probably, its cause, soon took his departure; not, however, until he

had obtained permission of Mrs. Hamilton to return with an eminent physician, a friend of his, to see the sick boy, who was evidently getting worse. He soon came back with the worthy Doctor, who pronounced the child in very precarious circumstances. From this time the young stranger, whom the Doctor called Mr. Clayton, became a constant visiter at Widow Hamilton's, somewhat to the good lady's surprise. It might, be sure, be from a feeling of sympathy at their unprotected situation; or, from a humane desire to assist in taking care of the sick boy. But Marian's ever-varying check told that she suspected a far different story. Besides, his visits continued after little James' recovery. Ay—and long after the restoration of Mrs. Hamilton's eyes to the blessed light of heaven, by the removal of those painful cataracts through the skill of Mr. Clayton's eminent physician.' What then could it be?

'We had almost given up looking for you this evening;' said Mrs. Hamilton, as Horace Clayton seated himself between her and Marian; 'and we were getting melancholy. For you have been with us so long—have ministered so kindly to us in sickness—have mingled so cheerfully in our devotions—that a day seems lost without you. Indeed you seem to fill the place of our dear Robert.'

'Would to heaven! my dear madam,' he replied, 'that you *would* consider me as another "dear Robert"—and he glanced significantly at the blushing Marian. 'Must I speak plainer?' he continued, after a moment's silence—'must I tell you how very—*very* necessary to my happiness is the possession of this inestimable girl?' taking in his own, Marian's trembling hand.

Mrs. Hamilton looked confused. 'I had not thought of this,' she answered, after a long pause. 'Besides, you know not what you ask. I am alone, as it were—Robert is a great way off—and how do you suppose I can think of parting with Marian, Mr. Clayton—WITH MARIAN?'

'Pardon me, my dear madam,' he replied, 'I was not so cruel as to think of Marian's leaving you. Indeed, I could hardly love her, if she were willing to do so, under existing circumstances. My desire is, that we shall all live together. My provident father made me, in early life, master of *two* trades, and I have no doubt but we can render ourselves a very comfortable and happy family.'

The face of the Widow brightened up, but she would

not consent to tax him with such a burthen, until, from repeated assurances to the contrary, and an appealing look from Marian, she concluded it to be the best way.

‘But, I forget,’ said she, as her eye caught the heartfelt smile that played upon Marian’s lip, ‘there may yet be an impediment to your union. I trust, Mr. Clayton, that you are perfectly acquainted with the liberality of my child’s religious sentiments. Her faith, I trust, is firm, though in a proscribed religion, and you may not covet the honor of having for a wife a decided Universalist.’

‘This shall be no objection ;’ replied he, gravely ; ‘for had my prejudices against this sect been ever so great, the piety of my dear Marian would long since have done them away. No, believe me, this shall never cause difficulty.’

The final arrangements were then made. The wedding was to take place in a few weeks, and Marian wrote to Robert, requesting his attendance ; but he returned for answer, that he could not, possibly, leave. The ceremony was therefore performed only in the presence of the family at home, Dr. — and an invalid lady, to whom Marian had rendered many services. The morning was a beautiful one, and as Mrs. Hamilton had not been out since the recovery of her sight, Mr. Clayton proposed her accompanying him and Marian in a short drive to their ‘cottage home,’ as he romantically termed his place of residence, ‘that they might judge of its comforts and convenience,’ he said, ‘before moving.’

‘And may not I go to-morrow ?’ asked Rose.

‘And I ?’ said Lewellyn.

‘And I, too ?’ said little James.

‘Yes, dears, you may all go to-morrow,’ replied Mr. Clayton, kissing them severally ; and jumping into the hack, they were soon out of sight.

‘You may stop here, driver,’ said Mr. Clayton, as they reached an almost princely residence, a short distance from town.

‘And why here, Horace ?’ inquired Marian, looking surprised.

‘Oh,’ said he, smiling, ‘your mother is fatigued by this time, and as I am on very intimate terms with the gentleman who resides here, I thought we would just take a peep into his bachelor’s hall while the horses are resting.’ The ladies accordingly alighted.

'What a splendid situation!' exclaimed Mrs. Hamilton, gazing admiringly upon the spacious marble mansion and its highly-finished out-houses.

'Your friend must be very wealthy, Mr. Clayton.'

'He is worth many thousands, madam,' was the reply.

'And oh, what beautiful, *beautiful* scenery!' ejaculated Marian, as she looked from the porch upon the far-stretched hills and meadows, through which ran streams of silver beauty. 'Mother, we are in a perfect paradise.'

They soon entered an elegantly furnished parlor, where Marian found many rich paintings to admire, one of which particularly riveted her fancy.

'Here mother,' said she, 'is a beautiful likeness of our own beloved John Murray. It cannot be possible, Horace, that your friend is a Universalist?'

'He is,' was the answer, 'and his enemies say a very *bigoted* one; and if zeal is one of the symptoms of bigotry, they may say true, for he displays the most zeal in what the "good people" term a "bad cause" of any one I ever saw.'

'Oh, how I should like to see him,' said Marian.

'You shall have the privilege before long,' replied Mr. Clayton, smiling at her eager enthusiasm. 'But now, while your mother is viewing his reverence, let us look into the next room.'

It was a large library; and Marian was delighted at the array of richly bound books, which met her eye in every direction. But what was her pleasure and astonishment, to behold, in a shaded corner of the room, what proved to be a harp—ay, upon examination, the very harp she had some months before, sold, to fee her brother's lawyer!

'What does this mean?' exclaimed she, almost gasping for breath—'Is this my very own, *own* harp? What *can* it mean?'

'It means, dearest,' whispered Clayton, affectionately kissing her cheek, 'that my sweet Marian is henceforth mistress of the place she has so flatteringly called a paradise, and that her husband, knowing he could not do too much for one so deeply loved, has purchased back her harp, that she may often be reminded of the dear father who gave it, and who is now an angel among the blest.'

'Oh, this is too, *too* much,' sobbed out the grateful girl upon his bosom. 'If Robert were only here now.'

'Robert is here,' exclaimed a well-known voice, and in the next moment, the son and brother was in their arms. It was a bewildered looking group. Robert gazed a moment upon Mr. Clayton, then turning to his mother and sister, begged to know what accident had brought them to the house of the 'People's Lawyer'?

'*The People's Lawyer!*' exclaimed they in a breath.

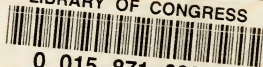
It would be useless to attempt describing the scene which followed this annunciation. It will suffice to say, that Mr. Clayton made an explanation, which showed that he was, unequivocally, 'the People's Lawyer,' who, having accidentally overheard the conversation between Merchant Ward and Robert, and being thereby thoroughly convinced of the honesty of the latter, determined to save him, although a stranger. He saw and admired Marian at the house of Mrs. Brownson, and determining that she should love him for himself, alone, he disguised himself, as he had often done before, in the dress of a common working man, (to which he seemed entitled, as his father had, through caprice, given him two trades,) and had succeeded in winning the heart of one, whose virtues were the effects of a doctrine dearer to him than his own life. He had written a statement of his situation, under injunctions of secrecy, to Robert's employer, and through him requested Robert's presence at his house at a given hour, on *special* business, 'which business,' said he, taking him affectionately by the hand, 'is, that you should leave New-York, and make us all happy, by taking up your abode with us, where you shall have abundant opportunity of glorifying, with us, your heavenly Father, by doing good to your fellow-creatures.'

'Oh, our God hath dealt very, *very* bountifully by us, my dear children,' exclaimed Mrs. Hamilton, raising her streaming eyes to heaven 'let us not neglect to acknowledge our heartfelt gratitude at the footstool of his great mercy.'

And those happy children knelt around their beloved mother, and listened to a prayer as humble, as fervent, as eloquent, as ever fell from human lips. And the pure devotion and piety, inspired by the belief of, and trust in, God's impartial, universal grace—thus tested by adversity, suffering, and temptation—continued brightly to glow, and give light to all around in the hour of prosperity, enjoyment, and triumph.



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 015 871 632 A